

## BOOK REVIEW

PETR SKLENÁŘ, JAMES L. LUTEYN, CARMEN ULLOA ULLOA, PETER J. JØRGENSEN, and MICHAEL O. DILLON. 2005. **Flora Genérica de los Páramos: Guía Ilustrada de las Plantas Vasculares**. (ISSN 0077-8931; ISBN 089527-468-2). Memoirs of the New York Botanical Garden, volume 92. New York Botanical Garden Press, 200<sup>th</sup> Street & Kazimiroff Blvd., Bronx, New York, 10458-5126, U.S.A. (**Orders:** nybgpress@nybg.org). \$85.00, 499 pp., 6 1/2" × 9 1/2".

The term páramos is often misunderstood even in some biological contexts. In this book's introduction, the authors rectify the misconceptions and clarify the word. Páramos is not an area confined to northern South American but rather it is an ecosystem that extends from the higher mountains of Costa Rica and Panama to northern Peru, thus embracing these countries as well as Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. It is an ecosystem rich in biodiversity and endemism and one of ecological extremes, to which the flora has adapted. Plant characteristics include acaulescent rosettes, shrubs with minute leaves, prostrate dwarf shrubs, and geophytes. The purpose of the book, however, is not to introduce these plants but to serve students and professionals as a guide to the genera of vascular plants, ultimately as an incentive for the protection of this unique and valuable ecosystem.

With this objective in mind, the authors provide many keys: a basic one to each of the major groups from pteridophytes to flowering plants, with especial attention to leaf structures, which account for five of the eight general keys. Within each of the 112 families (alphabetically listed) are keys to the 540 genera and keys to tribes. The text fully describes the genus and notes the countries and altitudes at which the plants grow. Accompanying the text is a picture, in most cases a drawing, of the single species in the genus or a representative species; almost all of these were previously published and are so acknowledged in an appendix. References follow each entry.

The five authors are at major botanical institutions. The leading author, Petr Sklenář is associated with the New York Botanical Garden and teaches at Charles University, Prague. Nine other professionals are cited as contributors.—*Joann Karges (retired TCU Library), Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.*

*Editor's note.*—See page 724.